Reviewer's report

Title: Family structure and breakfast consumption of 11-15 year old boys and girls in Scotland, 1994-2010: a repeated cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 5 December 2011

Reviewer: Natalie Pearson

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This is an interesting article examining breakfast consumption and the context of the family structure over time. I have some comments below:

1. The introduction is quite thorough but is missing some references in places. Page 4, second paragraph of introduction, second sentence needs a reference. Also page 5, top paragraph third sentence.
2. Methods needs to be clearer. Can you clarify that the data is not matched across time points.
3. Breakfast consumption measure needs more explanation. Did you sum weekend and week day breakfast after the 2002 measure?
4. Also, why was breakfast coded as daily / less than daily? This would imply that those who ate breakfast on 6 days a week were breakfast skippers? It would be useful to see the responses to all categories in the paper. This decision to categorise breakfast consumers and as daily and skippers as less than daily is not consistent with the literature. Please provide a rational for this decision.
5. Results: the results section is quite messy and difficult to follow. It should have some structure e.g. breakfast at time 1, breakfast across time, family structure at time 1, family structure across time, family structure and breakfast at time 1 etc.
6. Results paragraph 1. Sentence stating that across all five points, 71% reported living with both parents.... is unclear because the sentence that follows says 61% lived with both parents in 2010. Consider restructuring the results to make it easier to follow.
7. Results paragraph 2, second sentence 'when split by family structure.... what year are you referring to here? This question can also be asked for the third paragraph when you are talking about odds. Please restructure and provide small headings to break the results up.
8. Results, third paragraph you speculate that the change in question format could have cause people to answer differently. Could it be that the change in question was more accurate because you ask for both weekday and weekend day? It could be that prior to 2002 you weren’t getting an accurate response. It would be interesting to see the responses to the categories for the both measures.
9. Last paragraph of results, second sentence is incomplete.
10. Discussion is too long and a lot of speculations are offered. I suggest that you
pick out the most significant findings from this study and discuss these with reference to the literature.

11. Discussion. Paragraph on page 14. Which study are you referring to when you say that the relationship between breakfast and ses was not consistent?
13. Page 15, middle paragraph last sentence is a huge speculation given that your measure has changed over time, consider softening your language which is very assuming.
14. First sentence on last paragraph on page 15 you say that increase in breakfast could be due to a combination of factors but in the last sentence of the previous paragraph you say that it is PRIMARILY due to increase in prevalence among those living with both parents.
15. Did you assess SES in this study?
16. Limitations are far too short, you don’t mention the change in measures and the possible impact this could have had.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests